

Connections

April 2022

For the member-owners of Brown County REA



Volume 26, Issue 4

Electric co-ops visit & educate Minnesota legislators on four main issues after the two-year Covid pause

Your electric co-op was among more than 230 democratically elected directors and leaders from the state's 50 electric cooperatives who gathered in St. Paul March 15 for the Minnesota Rural Electric Association's (MREA) Legislative Day. Driven by their members, democratically elected directors from Brown County REA (BCREA) advocated for policy that benefits their members in providing affordable, reliable, safe, and increasingly clean electricity.

BCREA CEO Mike Heidemann and four directors visited with our local Minnesota legislators (Senator Julie Rosen, plus Representatives Rod Hamilton, Paul Torkelson, Chris Swedzinski and Bjorn Olson). They discussed Minnesota electric cooperatives' 2022 legislative initiatives:

1. Maintain the property tax exemption for attachments to utility lines to keep electric service in rural Minnesota affordable.

2. Costly state electrical inspection permits for radio control replacements make load management upgrades uneconomic, which undermines Minnesota's energy and carbon reduction goals and increases costs to co-op member-owners.

3. Minnesota's electric co-ops support the continued buildout of public electric vehicle infrastructure in rural Minnesota. Electric co-ops are advocating for the public EV



Electric co-ops met with Senator Julie Rosen, Representatives Rod Hamilton, Bjorn Olson and Paul Torkelson. Rosen, Hamilton and Torkelson represent part of BCREA's service area.



Brown County REA Board President Thomas Hayes (left) and BCREA CEO Mike Heidemann (right) visited with Representative Paul Torkelson.

charging network funding from state and federal funds be directed to rural Minnesota; this helps cover the installation costs that otherwise are borne by co-op members.

4. Minnesota's electric cooperatives are partners in bringing fiber broadband to rural areas. (c)

At A Glance



Brown County Rural Electrical Association

Trust Board awards scholarships and funds

BCREA's Trust Board awarded Operation Round Up funds in the form of six \$250 scholarships and \$1,800 to local organizations. Learn more about it on Page 5 and consider being a part of Operation Round Up. (c)



Heat pumps continually improve the efficiency & built for colder weather

Advancements in air source heat pump (ASHP) technology for colder climates leads to increased adoption of these systems in recent years.

"Now that air source heat pump technology can effectively heat in subzero temperatures, we are seeing more interest," said Jeff Haase, manager of member services and end-use strategy at Great River Energy (GRE), your co-op's wholesale power provider. "It really started gaining momentum."

GRE serves members across Minnesota and is part of the Minnesota ASHP Collaborative, a joint effort that also includes Center for Energy and Environment (CEE), Minnesota Power, Missouri River Energy Services, Ottertail Power Company and Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency.

ASHPs are very energy-efficient technologies with the potential to meet member heating and cooling needs at reduced energy costs. As the technology has advanced in recent years, variable-speed heat pumps emerged as an even higher-efficiency option for heating and cooling homes in all climates. Cold-climate heat pump technology can operate efficiently below 20 degrees Fahrenheit and can save homeowners 30-55 percent on home heating costs. The reason is that heat pumps transfer heat and do not burn it; cold climate heat pumps are 200 to 300 percent efficient (most newer furnaces are 95 to 98 percent efficient.) As an added incentive for cold-climate ASHPs, your electric cooperative offer rebates, as listed on the co-op website.



The second generation of an air source heat pump was installed last month at Federated Rural Electric's Jackson office to serve a few offices not covered by the ground source heat pump. Back in 1995 the air source heat pump's standards for a unit like this were 9.7 SEER for cooling efficiency rating and 6.6 for HSPF (heating efficiency rating). After about 27 years Federated replaced this rusted-out ASHP with a new air source heat pump that has a 17.5 SEER and 9.0 HSPF. That's nearly double the SEER efficiency rating!

With increased awareness and incentives available ASHPs are becoming more common.

"We believe that trend will continue as the technology continues to evolve and consumer awareness increases," Haase added.

Homeowners may learn about ASHPs from their electric cooperative, through advertising or by word of mouth, but need to find a trained and knowledgeable contractor in order to install the technology. Doing some research and getting multiple quotes can help ensure a good fit.

"We encourage members to contact your local electric cooperative, to identify reputable contractors," said Federated's Jon Beckman, energy expert. "The combination of an expert HVAC installer and an informed homeowner will ensure the system will efficiently keep your home comfortable."

Every house is unique and a homeowner needs to understand the features of theirs to be most efficient and comfortable.

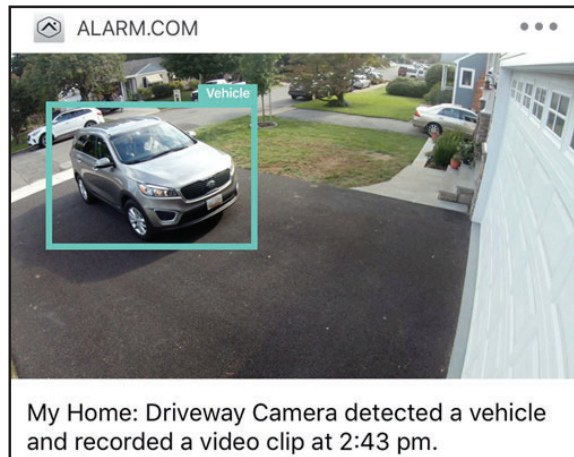
"Even with the learning curve that comes with new technology, it is encouraging that members, contractors and utilities are satisfied with the progress being made with cold climate ASHPs, especially in a climate like Minnesota," stated Marcia Solie, Brown County REA's energy expert.

Visit <https://www.energywisemn.com/air-heat-pumps> to learn more about ASHPs and visit your cooperative's website to print out the rebate forms. Otherwise, call the co-op to request it.

Trip wire alerts protect home & farm

Trip wire alerts notify you when someone crosses a virtual line in a specified direction. This is useful when vehicles are entering or leaving your property or when people use specific pathways around your home, like driveways, sidewalks or gates.

The latest security cameras from Alarm.com and Heartland Security, a subsidiary of your electric cooperative, use video analytics technology that helps pinpoint only the events that matter to you. This technology can recognize the difference between important activity versus other events. Rather than get alerted every time something moves, you can set your preferences to alert you for only what you want to see.




My Home: Driveway Camera detected a vehicle and recorded a video clip at 2:43 pm.

With these smart cameras you can set up a virtual trip wire to know when a vehicle enters your driveway or a person crosses a specific pathway in your yard. With this smart technology you won't get notified every time someone drives by your home or every time a squirrel crosses the sidewalk.

Heartland Security is an authorized Alarm.com dealer. They offer professionally installed cameras and 24/7 professionally monitored security systems to

help you protect your home, family and valuables.

For a free in-person quote call 1-888-264-6380 or visit Heartland Security at www.heartlandss.com. Co-op members get a special discount! 

Farmers: be careful around electric poles

As farmers make plans to return to their fields for spring planting, your electric co-op urges farm workers to be alert to the dangers of working near overhead power lines.

Maintain a minimum 10-foot clearance from power lines. Many tractors are now equipped with communications systems that have tall antennas extending from the cab that could make contact with power lines. Avoid raising the arms of planters or cultivators near power lines. Simply coming too close to a power line while working is dangerous as electricity can arc or "jump" to conducting material or objects, such as a ladder, pole or truck.

Guy wires are also dangerous to hit. Damaging them can de-stabilize an electric pole. If you hit a guy wire and break it, call the electric co-op to fix it. Do not do it yourself.


If your equipment does come into contact with power lines, stay in the



cab and call for help. If the power line is energized and you step outside, your body becomes the path to the ground for the electricity. Warn others who may be nearby to stay away and wait until the electric utility arrives.

If leaving the cab is necessary, as in the case of fire, the proper action is to jump — not step — with both feet together, hitting the ground at the same

time. Do not allow any part of your body to touch the equipment and the ground at the same time. Hop to safety, keeping both feet together as you leave the area.

Farmers may want to consider moving or burying power lines around buildings or busy pathways. 

— Story courtesy of safeelectricity.org

Brown County Briefs

Energy efficiency tip

When streaming content, use the smallest device that makes sense for the number of people watching. Avoid streaming on game consoles, which use 10 times more power than streaming through a tablet or laptop. Streaming content with electronic equipment that has earned the Energy Star® rating will use 25-30 percent less energy than standard equipment.

Member Advisory Council

After a two-year lapse, Brown County REA will hold the first 2022 meeting of the Member Advisory Council Monday, April 11. Details will be mailed out to members.

Notice of cogeneration



In compliance with Brown County Rural Electrical Association (REA)'s adopted rules relating to cogeneration and small power production, Brown County REA is obligated to interconnect with and purchase electricity from cogeneration and small power producers, whom satisfy the conditions as a qualifying facility. Brown County REA is obligated to provide information free of charge to all interested members, upon request, regarding rates and interconnection requirements. All interconnections require an application and approval to become a qualifying facility. Any dispute over interconnections, sales and purchases are subject to resolution by the Brown County REA Board of Directors. Interested members should contact Brown County REA, 24386 State Highway 4, PO Box 529, Sleepy Eye, MN 56085 or call 800-658-2368 (C)

Kreilkamp wins Youth Tour Contest



Logan Kreilkamp of rural New Ulm was selected to represent Brown County REA at the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour in Washington, D. C., June 14-19

Kreilkamp will travel with approximately 40 students from other Minnesota electric cooperatives on the all-expense paid trip to the nation's capital. While there, he will participate in leadership training, engage in one-on-one conversations with elected officials and tour museums, monuments and memorials in Washington, D. C.

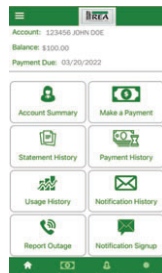
The Minnesota delegation will be joined by youth representing electric cooperatives from across the United States during the 56th anniversary tour.

Logan is a sophomore at Cathedral High School in New Ulm. He is the son of Todd Kreilkamp and Tawnya Meier.

Grace Mages, a sophomore at Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School, was awarded second place and a \$150 prize. Third place and \$100 went to Ashley Schaefer, a sophomore at New Ulm Cathedral High School.

Adam Johnson, Sleepy Eye Public School, and Courtney Brey, New Ulm Public School, each received \$25 gift cards. (C)

Updated mobile app coming soon; upgrade required; new users welcome



Brown County REA members who use the co-op's mobile app to conveniently view their account statements, energy usage and make payments will need to update from the current application to a new mobile app before June 30. Current users will be able to use their existing username and password. Members who have not used the app in the past are encouraged to sign up as well. Look for more details and instructions in the May *Connections* and on our website. (C)

Members gather for 85th Annual Meeting Hundreds turn out after meeting's two-year absence



More than 400 Brown County REA members, spouses, employees and guests filled the Sleepy Eye Event Center March 31 for the Annual Meeting. A total of 253 members were registered and the proposed by-law amendment passed. CEO Mike Heidemann (far left) and Board of Directors pictured after the meeting (left to right) Jim Hanson, Attorney Jeremy Berg, Joel Christensen, Greg Mages, Bill Berg, Tom Hayes, Brad Sprenger, Jim Mickelson, David Wendinger and Landon Sletta. More information and photos will be included in the May *Connections*. (C)



National Lineworker Appreciation Month

BCREA salutes its linecrews this month for keeping the power on every month. April is National Lineworker Appreciation Month. If you see your local electric co-op linemen, be sure to thank them for keeping the lights on in rain, snow, ice, wind and sun. Thanks, linemen! ☺

BCREA volunteers help out



Brown County REA representatives were among more than 100 electric cooperative volunteers from 25 states joining together March 5 for the 14th annual Touchstone Energy Community Service Project. From left to right: Lineman Brady Kerkhoff and his wife, Courtney, Caleb Heideman, Amy Heideman, BCREA CEO Mike Heidemann, Operations and Engineering Manager Brandon Havemeier and his wife, Danielle, participated in the project while attending the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's PowerXchange event in Nashville, Tennessee. The group helped package more than 16,000 meals for families in need in the Murfreesboro community and area. Other projects included sprucing up a daycare facility playground, installing LED lighting at a school and holding a drive-through food pantry. ☺

Trust Board awards 2020 scholarships, donates \$1,800



At its March 29 meeting, the Brown County Rural Electric Trust Board met to review applications for the 2022 Operation

Round Up scholarships.

Six \$250 scholarships were awarded to high school seniors whose parents/guardians are Brown County REA members. Scholarship recipients are: Morgan Engholm, Morgan; Emily Guggisberg, New Ulm; Morgan Hoffmann, Sleepy Eye; Renae Juni, New Ulm; Connor Scholten, Sanborn, Hope Winterfeld, Comfrey. Photos and additional information will be published in the *May Connections*.

The trust board also distributed \$1,800 to seven organizations and one individual family at the meeting. Donations were made to New Ulm Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS) cancer care bags project, Brown County Free Fair, Sleepy Eye Community Theatre, St. Raphael's Catholic School motivational speaker event and after prom activities at Comfrey and New Ulm Cathedral schools. The next meeting is set for August 16. ☺

Members invited to Brown County REA's 85th Anniversary Picnic

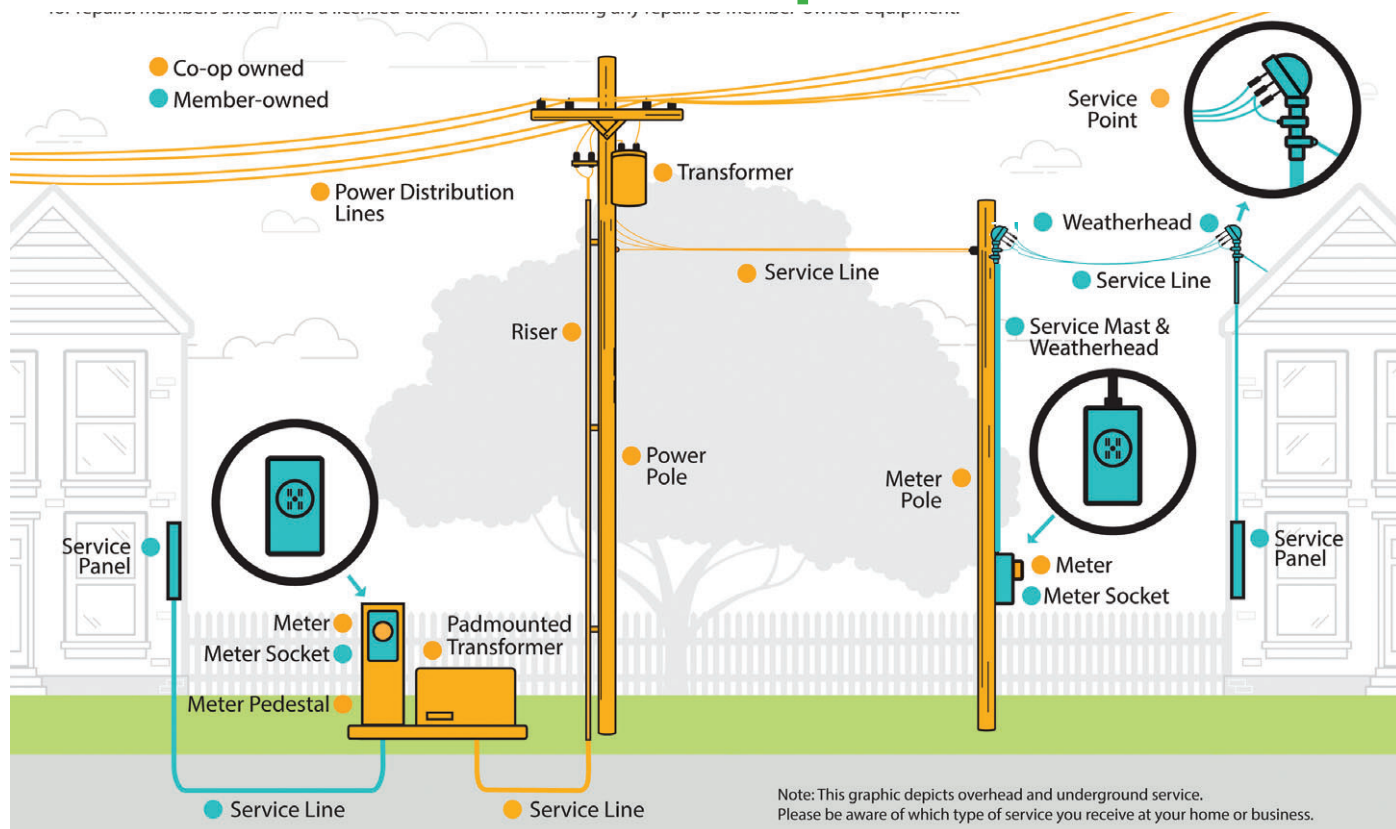
Date: June 14

Time: 4:30-7:30 p.m.

Location: BCREA Headquarters
24386 State Hwy. 4
Sleepy Eye

Join the co-op for a meal, check out trucks and equipment, building tours and drawings for prizes. All members & families welcome! ☺

Who fixes what? It depends on the location from the cooperative's meter



Your yard light is off. Who are you gonna call? The electrician or the cooperative?

You have an outage and call the cooperative, but oops, the problem was on your side of the meter.

In the past the cooperative has been a good neighbor and fixed these types of problems. However, with liability issues, supply chain issues and line crews' valuable time, the cooperative wants to remind you who you should call and when. This will ultimately save the cooperative money, which is good for your electric bill.

Co-op owns the meter

The rule of thumb is where is your meter located? See the graphic above. Your cooperative is responsible for the power lines and equipment from the substation to your meter. Then the member owns the lines/equipment from the meter to the farm buildings, home or business. Often, if the issue is

on your side of the meter, you own the equipment with the problem and the cooperative is NOT legally responsible for that equipment. In that case please call your electrician.

If you are paying the electric cooperative a monthly fee for the yard light on your electric bill, then the cooperative will fix that. With supply chain issues for yard lights, the cooperative can no longer make repairs if the yard light is not cooperative property. Call your electrician.

The wire going from the meter pole to the machine shed is taken down in a storm? If it's on your side of the meter, call your electrician.

You need the overhead wires disconnected from an outbuilding on the farm. If it's on your side of the meter, call your electrician. However, the co-op will shut off the power if needed at the pole. The electrician will then have to rebuild that — not the co-op.

One building on the farm doesn't have power, but the rest of the farm does. Again, talk to your electrician first.

Troubleshooting tips

If the co-op member calls the cooperative for an outage and the trouble is found to be on the member-owner's wiring or equipment, the cooperative may bill the member-owner for the trip charge.

- Check your building's breaker/fuse box to make sure it has not tripped.

- Call your neighbor to see if they are out of power. At night you can look to see if neighbors' yard lights are out of power too.

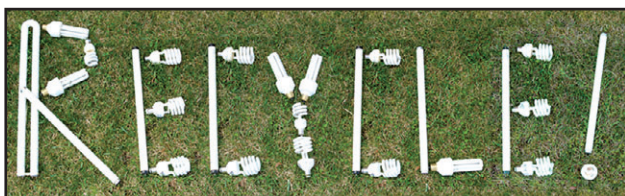
- Look at your electric meter. See if the electronic LED screen shows meter readings or is blank. If it is blank, call the cooperative to respond to the outage. If it has numbers on the screen, then the odds are the problem is on your side of the meter so call your electrician.

Rise to the occasion & 'dough' share your favorite bread recipes

Do not "loaf" around! Share your favorite bread recipes, whether for quick bread, yeast, sour dough bread, bread machine or even speciality breads. Mail to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by April 26. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! 📧

Add 'recycle fluorescent bulbs' to your spring do list

State law requires the recycling of fluorescent and compact fluorescent bulbs due to the mercury. Check out these local recycling options this spring.



Brown County

The dates are set for May 4-5. A fee applies for recycling bulbs. Recycling occurs at:

- Springfield Market, 101 W. Central St., Springfield, May 4 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- Brown County Fairgrounds in New Ulm, May 5 from 2 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- Sleepy Eye Hardware, 1200 Main St. E., Sleepy Eye, accepts fluorescent bulbs for recycling year-round and will dispose for a fee. Call 507-794-3611 or stop by the store for pricing. The store also recycles high-pressure-sodium, mercury-vapor and metal-halide lamps for a fee.
- River View Sanitation will sponsor an *Electronics & Appliance Recycling Day*, which will include fluorescent bulb recycling, May 18, from noon to 6 p.m. at the Sleepy Eye Baseball Field parking lot. Fluorescent lamps 8' and under: \$1, ballast — PCB: \$7.50/lb. and PCB capacitors: \$7.50/lb. Most household appliances, including water heaters, refrigerators and freezers, computer CPUs, phones, keyboards, etc. and car batteries are free. Battery backups, printers, DVD/VCRs, copiers/scanners and stereos: \$10. Computer monitors and TVs: \$25. RV appliances: \$75.

Jackson County

Residents of Jackson County can recycle their fluorescent bulbs at one of the Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Facilities which are typically open June through October. All bulbs, regardless of size, are 50¢ each for disposal and ballasts with PCBs are \$3.25.

Other electronics are not accepted at the HHW. An E-Waste Collection for residents and businesses will be held on September 16-17 at the Jackson County Fairgrounds. Due to the volatility of the market, e-waste collection fees will be established closer to the collection date. You can find more information about the HHW Facilities and E-Waste Collection advertised in the *Livewire*; on the Land Management website: www.co.jackson.mn.us/land; or you may call the Land Management Office at 507-662-6682, extension 4.

Martin County

Recycle fluorescent bulbs May 5 at the Tractor Supply (1215 N State St., Fairmont) parking lot from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Bulbs are accepted from the homes and businesses in the county. A fee applies for recycling bulbs. Call the Fairmont Area Chamber of Commerce at 507-235-5547. 📧

Whiskey Barbecue Pork by Mary Ellen Stenzel, Heron Lake

- 1/2 to 3/4 c. brown sugar, packed
- 6 oz. can tomato paste
- 1/3 c. barbecue sauce
- 1/4 c. whiskey 2 T. liquid smoke
- 2 T. Worcestershire sauce
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 tsp. chili powder 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. pepper 1/2 tsp. hot pepper sauce
- 1/4 tsp. ground cumin
- 3-4 lb. boneless pork shoulder butt roast 1 med. onion, quartered

Mix in a bowl the first 12 ingredients. Place roast and onion in a 5-quart slow cooker. Add the sauce. Cook 6-8 hours.

Remove roast and onion. Cool the pork slightly; discard the onion. Skim fat from sauce. If desired, transfer sauce to a small saucepan and bring to a boil to thicken. Shred pork. Return pork and sauce to slow cooker; heat. Serve on buns, baked potatoes or nachos. 📧

Call before digging!

1-800-252-1166



Call Gopher State One Call before doing any digging more than 12" deep — 48 hours before digging for foundations, trees, tiling and more. You can also register at www.gopherstateonecall.org or call 811. Call a licensed electrician to locate the underground lines on your side of the meter. Safety first this spring! 📧



**Brown County
Rural Electrical
Association**

Brown County Rural Electrical Assn.
24386 State Hwy 4, PO Box 529
Sleepy Eye MN 56085

E-mail address: bcrea@bcrea.coop
Website: www.browncountyrea.coop
Phone: 507-794-3331 or 800-658-2368
Office hours: 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Friday

Mike Heidemann, Chief Executive Officer

Board of Directors

Thomas Hayes, President — 228-8954
William Berg, Vice President — 766-1497
James D. Hanson, Sec.-Treasurer — 829-6756
Brad Sprenger — 317-5576
David Wendinger — 276-3166
Greg Mages — 794-3540
Joel Christensen — 828-4550
James Mickelson — 794-6298
Landon Sletta — 439-6559
The Board of Directors meets the last Thursday of each month.



**Brandon Havemeier
Operations Manager**

Staff Notes

BCREA's crews gearing up for the summer construction and maintenance projects

The 2022 construction season for BCREA is shaping up to be a busy one. As the temperatures rise and ground conditions improve, our line crews and contractors are preparing for construction and maintenance projects throughout the service area.

A lot of time and planning has gone into relocation of existing underground lines to accommodate the Highway 14 expansion to four lanes between New

Ulm and Nicollet. BCREA crews will install temporary lines for use during the construction and relocating 3½ miles of three-phase underground line and replacing 1½ miles of single-phase overhead line with underground line. Weather permitting, work is expected to begin in mid-April. Our line crews will also work to replace 3½ miles of three-phase overhead service with underground in West Newton Township.

In addition to the work plan projects planned for the summer, we will replace overhead services throughout the year and focus on areas where we have had recent tree issues via tree trimming or replacing the overhead line with underground cable. At the end of March Brown County REA began inspection of all underground locations and equipment in Courtland, Lafayette and Bernadotte townships.

BCREA contracted with Central Applicators, Inc. to maintain and control vegetation at all of our substation this year. Work is expected to begin in early June, depending on weather conditions. Central Applicators use an EPA-approved herbicide to treat unwanted brush and noxious weeds.

Southwood 2000, a subsidiary of Redwood Electric Cooperative in Clements, will continue to locate our underground cable throughout the year. In addition to locating, Southwood 2000 will inspect poles in Courtland, Lafayette, Cornish and Alfsborg townships. Pole inspection involves visually inspecting the pole, checking for cracks, equipment damage and burn marks from ditch fires. If the pole passes that part of the inspection, then they dig down 18 inches to inspect the base of the pole. To check for internal decay, they drill into the core of the pole. The base of the pole is also visually checked for decay. If the pole does not pass inspection, it is rejected and will be replaced. We test the poles regularly to meet requirements of the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) and to improve service reliability.

Carr's Tree Service will be back in the service area in July trimming trees system-wide. Much of the planned work will require crews and contractors to enter members' property to access and inspect equipment.

As always, we ask you to be aware of BCREA equipment as you are working in your fields and yards. Be aware of transformers and other equipment while out mowing, riding ATV or working in the fields. Be aware of the location of poles and overhead lines when planting, spraying and moving equipment. Remember to call Gopher State One Call at 800-252-1166 or 811 or apply online at www.gopherstateonecall.org before starting any digging more than 12 inches deep.

All of us at BCREA wish you a safe spring and summer. ☺

Board meeting highlights

The Brown County REA Board of Directors held its monthly board meeting March 31, 2022. Discussion and/or action were taken on the following agenda items:

- Reviewed and approved the February 2022 board meeting minutes, new membership applications, member cancellations, payments to estates and assignment transfers.
- Reviewed and approved December 2021 and January 2022 financial statement, February 2022 payroll.
- Reviewed and approved the 2021 financial audit as presented by Nick Crank of Eide Bailly, LLP.
- Reviewed the Cooperative-MIP documents and received the 2021 Cogeneration/Distributed Energy Resources annual report.
- Approved appointments to the Member Advisory Council which will meet on April 11, 2022.
- Reviewed and approved the cooperative's Rural Development Utility Services (RUS) Form 7.
- Reviewed and approved revisions to the BCREA Service Agreement.
- Updated on operations and maintenance activities.

The next meeting is April 28, 2022. ☺